

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are reproduced in their entirety below.

23. (Currently Amended) A drive assembly, comprising:
- a drive shaft;
 - at least one wheel disposed on the drive shaft;
 - an internal combustion engine comprising an output shaft and a housing;
 - a driving pinion disposed on the output shaft of the engine within the housing;
 - a driven pinion disposed on the drive shaft within the housing; and
 - a reduction gearing ~~operatively connecting~~ toothedly intermeshing the driving pinion to the driven pinion within the housing;
- wherein the shafts of the driving pinion, driven pinion, and reduction gearing are separated by distances within the housing that are fixed and invariable.
24. (New) The drive-assembly of claim 23, wherein the reduction gearing is disposed on an intermediate shaft.
25. (New) The drive-assembly of claim 23, wherein the drive shaft is a rear wheel drive shaft.
26. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the engine is a reciprocating piston engine.
27. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the engine is a rotary piston engine.

28. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the housing is a closed structure.

29. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the driving pinion is connected to the output shaft through a coupling to rotate with the output shaft.

30. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 29, wherein the coupling is a centrifugal clutch.

31. (New) The drive assembly of claim 25, wherein the rear wheel drive shaft extends through and rotates within the housing.

32. (New) The drive assembly of claim 31, wherein the driven pinion is releasably connected to the rear wheel drive shaft through a connecting element, and wherein the connecting element is accessible through a closeable opening in the housing.

33. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 32, wherein the connecting element comprises a bolt.

34. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 31, wherein the rear wheel drive shaft comprises a center section rotatably disposed within the housing and two additional shaft sections connected at either end of the center section, and

wherein rear wheels are attached to outer ends of the two additional shaft sections.

35. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 32, wherein the driven pinion includes a hollow shaft integrally molded therewith,

wherein the hollow shaft encircles the rear wheel drive shaft, and

wherein the connecting element is a releasable key.

36. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 23, further comprising an overload coupling operatively connecting the output shaft with the driving pinion.

37. (New) The drive assembly of claim 32, wherein the driven pinion includes a hollow shaft integrally molded therewith,

wherein the hollow shaft encircles the rear wheel drive shaft, and

wherein the hollow shaft connects with the rear wheel drive shaft flexible coupling.

38. (New) The drive assembly of claim 37, wherein the flexible coupling is a rubber element.

39. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 37, wherein the flexible coupling is a friction clutch.

40. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the reduction gearing comprises a multi-gear element permitting gear shifting.

41. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the reduction gearing is a multi-stage gearing, the final stage of which permits gear shifting.

42. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 40, further comprising:
a gear shift lever mounted on a steering wheel;
a selector rod interacting with the multi-gear element; and
a cable connecting the gear shift lever to the selector rod,
wherein actuation of the gear shift lever actuates the selector rod, via the
cables cable to shift gears.

43. (New) The drive assembly of claim 42, wherein the cable is a Bowden cable.

44. (New) The drive assembly of claim 41, further comprising:
a gear shift lever mounted on a steering wheel;
a selector rod interacting with the multi-stage gearing; and
a cable connecting the gear shift lever to the selector rod,
wherein actuation of the gear shift lever actuates the selector rod, via the
cable, to shift gears.

45. (New) The drive assembly of claim 44, wherein the cable is a Bowden cable.

46. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the reduction gearing comprises:

first and second stages disposed on a common lay shaft.

47. (New) The drive assembly of claim 46, wherein the first stage comprises at least one gear replaceable by gears of varying diameters to provide different reduction ratios.

48. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 25 47, wherein the housing further comprises a removable cover enclosing the at least one replaceable gear.

49. (Currently Amended) ~~The drive assembly of claim 46, further comprising:~~

A drive assembly, comprising:

a drive shaft;

an internal combustion engine comprising an output shaft and a housing;

a driving pinion disposed on the output shaft of the engine within the housing;

a driven pinion disposed on the drive shaft within the housing;

a reduction gearing operatively connecting the driving pinion to the driven pinion within the housing;

a balance weight mounted on the lay shaft and rotatable thereon, wherein the balance weight is configured as a first spur gear; and

a second spur gear mounted on the output shaft, wherein the diameters of the first and second spur gears are substantially identical, wherein the first spur gear is driven by the second spur gear gear.

wherein the shafts of the driving pinion, driven pinion, and reduction gearing are separated by distances within the housing that are fixed and invariable, and

wherein the reduction gearing comprises first and second stages disposed on a common lay shaft.

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50. (New) The drive assembly of claim 46, further comprising:
a starter ring gear disposed on the output shaft; and
a starter motor,
wherein the starter motor drives the starter ring gear through the gearing on the lay shaft.
51. (New) The drive shaft assembly of claim 46, further comprising:
a cooling water pump arranged coaxially with the lay shaft, wherein the cooling water pump is driven by the lay shaft.
52. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the drive assembly is adapted for use on a go-kart.
53. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the housing is secured to a frame by at least one bolted clamp.
54. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the housing is releasably clamped between two chassis tubes such that the engine partially occupies a space there between.
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